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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001292

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: IMPEACHMENT FEVER HITS ANAMBRA: GOVERNOR'S
POLITICAL FUTURE LOOKS SICKLY

REF: LAGOS 1083

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: The PDP National Chairman Ali and other national party executives went to Anambra yesterday for the ostensible purpose of dissuading the State Assembly members from impeaching Governor Obi, the lone APGA governor in Nigeria. There may be less to this mission than meets the eye. Ali's visit came as a result of a late night phone call during which President Obasanjo disavowed complicity in the impeachment move and told Governor Obi that he would quash it. However, APGA senior officials believe Obasanjo does not oppose the impeachment. The President was just upset that it came immediately after his visit to Anambra. Obasanjo does not want his fingerprints on this squalid deed, according to the APGA official. End summary.

Obasanjo Opposes Impeachment, Symbolically

¶2. (C) President Obasanjo toured Anambra State October 13 and ¶14. As prelude to the presidential visit, Special Presidential Adviser Andy Uba visited Anambra several days before. Uba's trip was occasioned by much fanfare - helicopters, convoys and purportedly sums of money he distributed to State Assembly members to put them in an impeachment mood. Uba, one of Obasanjo's closest advisers, covets the chair upon which Governor Obi now sits. Uba wants Obi out of the way so that he will not have to face any formidable competition in the 2007 elections.

¶3. (C) On October 16, the very first day after the presidential visit, the State Assembly instituted the impeachment proceedings. Most observers thought this was more than coincidental. They saw Obasanjo's imprimatur on this design.

Presidential Adviser Out-Muscles Governor

¶4. (C) The evening of 16 October, while sequestered to avoid receipt of the Assembly's impeachment notice, Governor Obi called Obasanjo, requesting his intervention. During the call, Obasanjo disavowed knowledge of this turmoil and promised to dispatch the PDP national chairman to Anambra to call the rash Assembly to order. Obi was buoyed by the conversation, believing the tide had turned decisively in his favor due to the President's apparent support. Following presidential instructions, PDP Chair Ali met the renegade State Assembly members. Ali returned to Abuja without lawmakers' agreement that they would cease impeachment proceedings. The lawmakers seriously rebuffed Ali, saying to

retract the impeachment would undermine their legitimacy and their chances to win reelection. APGA senior official Onwuka Ukwu contended that, had Obasanjo truly given Ali a hard order to stop Obi's impeachment, these usually feckless lawmakers would have caved to presidential pressure.

15. (C) According to Ukwu, Obasanjo's support was more apparent than real. Although a member of APGA, Obi's party, Ukwu had links to the PDP, the party to which the State Assembly members belong. Based on his talks with his PDP contacts, Ukwu concluded that Obasanjo had been mendacious. Obasanjo actually supported or was agnostic about the impeachment. He just did not want it linked so closely to his visit. He didn't want it attributed directly to him. Thus, while the President's conversation with Obi was that of a statesman, his actions and motivations were more serpentine, Ukwu protested.

16. (C) Since taking office a few months ago, Obi has cultivated his relationship with Obasanjo. He has visited Abuja frequently and has done all he could to obtain presidential favor, including regularly attending the president's early morning prayer meetings. Obi's tack to securing presidential approbation seems to have been only superficially successful. The gist of Obi's problem is that his most formidable opponent is also one of the president's closest advisors, Andy Uba.

17. (C) If the president is forced to decide between Obi and Uba, the outcome is almost pre-ordained. Obi will be shown the political wilderness. In hindsight, Obi probably would have better spent his time trying to cultivate the State Assembly than to woo Obasanjo from his closeness to Uba. However, Obi has been parsimonious in distributing patronage

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within the state. Obi is also hindered by his lack of charisma and aloofness to the extent he has alienated many of his own party members, let alone members of the rival PDP. Installed only eight months ago, Obi has not been in office long enough to be either hero or villain. However, his inability to consolidate power and insulate himself from Uba's machinations have rendered him vulnerable.

Comment

18. (C) Comment: Because of the president's obfuscation, the wind is not blowing in one single direction at the moment. Obi may get a brief respite. However, that a storm will descend on the governor's mansion seems inexorable if Uba is pushing for it and all Obasanjo wants to do is not to have his fingerprints on it. Cynical observers and Obasanjo critics would point to Anambra, along with ongoing impeachment sagas in Ekiti and Plateau States, as evidence of a plan to generate so much political uncertainty that the 2007 election would have to be postponed. End comment.

BROWNE